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## MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY NOTES

### ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society was held in the Capitol at St. Paul on the evening of January 10, 1916. The principal business was the presentation of the reports of the superintendent and treasurer on the operations and finances of the society during the year 1915. Mr. Ford spoke briefly on the need of a national archives building and presented the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

"Whereas the records and papers of the United States government contain an inexhaustible and priceless body of information for the statesman, the administrator, the historian, and the reading public; and,

"Whereas many of these papers, such as the fundamental land records, military, Indian, and territorial records, are also of great importance to the state of Minnesota both from the administrative and historical points of view; and,

"Whereas these papers are now scattered through many repositories in Washington, housed often at great expense for rental in unsafe and unsuitable buildings, exposed to danger from fire, and difficult of access; and,

"Whereas the only true remedy lies in the construction of a suitable national archives building, in which these papers and records can be arranged systematically, found with rapidity, and consulted with ease;

"Resolved that we, the members of the Minnesota Historical Society in annual meeting assembled, respectfully request the representatives and senators from Minnesota in Congress to do all in their power to further the passage by Congress of appropriations for the speedy construction of a suitable building in which to concentrate and properly care for the muniments of the American people."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Copies of these resolutions were sent, as directed, to each of the senators and representatives from Minnesota in Congress, and replies have been received at this writing from Senators Nelson and Clapp, and Representatives Miller, Davis, Smith, Steenerson,

At the close of the business session the society adjourned from its reading room to the Senate Chamber, where, despite the inclement weather, a good-sized audience was gathered to hear the annual address by President Vincent of the University of Minnesota on "The Social Memory."

#### MEMBERSHIP

The total number of members on the rolls of the society on January 1, 1916, was 435, of whom 21 were honorary, 79 corresponding, and 335 active members. The active members are further classified as 269 life, 51 sustaining, and 15 annual members. There were 38 new members enrolled during the year, 37 being active and 1 corresponding. There were 27 members dropped for non-payment of dues and 15 died during the year, making a total loss of 42. Of these, 38 belonged to the class of active members, 3 were corresponding members, and 1 was an honorary member. It will be seen, therefore, that there has been a nominal decrease of 1 in the active membership, and 4 in the total membership. In reality, however, the 27 members who were dropped from the rolls for non-payment of dues should not have been counted as members a year ago, in which case the increase in active membership would have appeared as 26. It should be stated that several opportunities were given to delinquents to pay up their back dues, and some did so. The names of the remainder were then stricken from the rolls. The Minnesota Historical Society should have a much larger membership, for certainly there are many more people in the state who are interested in its history, and who would wish to be connected with the society if the matter were brought to their attention effectively.

The following active members were enrolled during 1915: John M. Bradford, E. L. Shepley, Rev. Arthur W. Farnum, Harry T. Drake, George B. Ware, Professor Thomas Shaw, Homer P. Clark, Amanda Sundean, Mrs. Mary E. McGill, C. J. McConville, Professor Henry M. Funk, James D. Armstrong,

Van Dyke, and Anderson. Most of those who replied expressed their hearty approval of the movement, but some doubted the possibility of securing an appropriation for the building at the present session of Congress. Members of the society whose representatives' names do not appear in the list would do well to write to them urging their support of the measure.

Frances H. Relf, and Victor Robertson of St. Paul; James T. Gerould, Professor Wallace Notestein, Mrs. James T. Morris, Anson S. Brooks, Professor Albert B. White, N. N. Ronning, Mrs. George E. Tuttle, Professor A. C. Krey, and Wilson P. Shortridge of Minneapolis; Earl W. La Gow, Sleepy Eye; Dr. Howard M. Hamblin, Washington, D. C.; George M. Palmer, Mankato; Henry S. Welcome, London, England; Theodore C. Blegen, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Dr. H. M. Blegen, Oslo; F. Curtiss-Wedge, Winona; Mary V. Carney, Hibbing; Rev. T. A. Stafford, Litchfield; and James M. George, Winona.

The present whereabouts of three of the life members of the society are unknown, letters having been returned undelivered from the addresses on the records. They are Rev. William Gannett, formerly of Rochester, Minnesota; Thomas H. Kirk, formerly of San Bernardino, California; and Charles Eliot Pike, formerly of Los Angeles, California. It is possible that some of these are no longer living, but no records of their deaths have been received in the office. Information about them will be greatly appreciated.

#### GROWTH OF THE LIBRARY

The total number of accessions recorded during the year 1915 was 2,232, of which 1,870 were bound volumes, and 362 were pamphlets placed in pamphlet binders. Of these accessions, 956 items were purchased, 123 were received as exchanges, 366 are gifts, not including 156 United States government documents received on deposit, and 371 are volumes of newspapers donated by the publishers, but bound by the society. The remaining 260 items represent material, mostly pamphlets, which has been in the possession of the society for some time, but was not accessioned until the past year. The total number of accessions on January 1, 1916, was 78,854, of which 78,492 are bound volumes and 362 are pamphlets in binders. The unaccessioned material in the library is estimated at 41,000, making a total estimated strength of almost 120,000 books and pamphlets. Most of the unaccessioned material is in the form of pamphlets, many of which are of great value; all except those of an ephemeral character will be put in pamphlet binders and accessioned as rapidly as possible.

In view of the crowded condition of the library, it does not seem feasible to make extensive purchases of books at the present time. Much of the energy of the library staff, therefore, is directed to the filling-in of the many gaps in the various sets contained in the library. Considerable progress has been made along these lines, and it is believed that the value of the library as an historical workshop will be thereby greatly increased.

#### A COOPERATIVE VENTURE

The most important materials for the history of Minnesota, outside the state, are to be found in the archives of the United States government at Washington. Unfortunately the conditions in the various archive depositories make the use of these materials very difficult, and in some cases their permanent preservation is doubtful unless the government speedily constructs a national archives building. For some years a number of historical institutions in the Northwest have been searching in various of these depositories for material relating to their respective fields, and have been securing photographic copies of what seemed to be of value. During the past year, however, the historical societies and departments of Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota got together and agreed to coöperate in a search of the files of the state department. The services of an expert were secured, and he is now engaged in calendaring all material in these files bearing on the history of the coöperating states. By means of this calendar each institution can select such documents as it desires to have photographed for its library. In the course of time, therefore, it is expected that the Minnesota Historical Society will secure a collection of material of great importance, especially for the territorial period, at a cost which will be small compared to what it would cost to do this without the coöperation of the other institutions.

#### AN APPEAL TO THE MEMBERS

Occasionally members are at a loss to know just how they can be of assistance to the society, and a few suggestions may be in order. No phase of the society's work is more important than the gathering-in of manuscript papers and records, old news-

paper files, and fugitive publications, for, once destroyed, such material can seldom be restored. There is hardly a member but knows of or can locate material of this sort and can secure its deposit with the society if he will make the effort. One difficulty seems to be a failure on the part of many to realize that the breadth of historical interests to-day gives value to almost every scrap of paper with writing on it and every printed folder or handbill. In case of doubt whether material would or would not be desirable for preservation by the society, it is always best to send it in and let us see if we can't find some point of view from which it might be of value. Probably every member of the society belongs to other societies, clubs, and institutions in the state which issue regular or occasional publications. Yearbooks, reports, even programs and announcements of such organizations should be preserved in the library, and members can help in this by sending in their own copies or having the society put on the mailing list.

Perhaps one of the most important services which a member can render to the society is to impress upon the people of the state and especially upon the members of the legislature the fact that the society is in effect a state institution; that the work which it is performing is properly a function of the state and should be supported by it; that the appropriations for the maintenance of the society are not in the nature of gifts to a private institution, but comprise rather funds set aside for the state's historical activities and administered by the society. If historical work in Minnesota is to compare favorably with that of neighboring states, a considerable increase in the annual appropriation will soon be needed. The present staff is not large enough to care properly for a rapidly growing library of 120,000 volumes, to say nothing of field work, research, and editorial work. If, as is expected, provision is made for the transfer of state archives to the new building, appropriations will be needed for their administration. The possibilities of historical work are very great at this time in Minnesota, where the pioneers are now passing off the stage. Fifty years hence much of the material existing to-day will be destroyed, and no amount of expenditure in the future can make up for the failure of the present generation to preserve the records of the past and the passing ages.

## GIFTS

An ornamented hammer presented by Mr. W. E. Mowrey, through the courtesy of the treasurer of the society, Mr. E. H. Bailey, is an interesting memento. It is accompanied by a neatly lettered card containing the following explanation :

"This hammer was used on the occasion of driving 'the last spike' connecting the eastern and western sections of the main line of the Northern Pacific Railroad, at a point  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Garrison, Montana. President Henry Villard of the Railroad Co. had invited a large party of distinguished men from a number of foreign countries, as well as our own, for an excursion over the road, conveyed by four sections of a special train, starting from St. Paul on Monday, Sept. 3rd, 1883, after elaborate celebrations at St. Paul and Minneapolis, and reaching the point of connection on Saturday afternoon, Sept. 8th. After speeches by Mr. Villard, Hon. Wm. M. Evarts (chief orator), Secretary Teller, Ex President of the R. R. Co. Mr. Frederick Billings, Sir James Hannon, the German Minister Von Eisendecker, and General U. S. Grant, at 6:13 P. M., Central time, the last spike was driven by Mr. Villard and Mr. Henry C. Davis, who, it was claimed, had driven the *first* spike at Northern Pacific Junction (now Carleton), Minn. The Telegraph Dept. of the Company had connected one end of the telegraph wire to the hammer, and the other end to the spike, so that a signal would be sent simultaneously to St. Paul and Portland on each stroke. At St. Paul it was so arranged that a cannon was automatically fired in Smith Park by the first stroke of the hammer. At the conclusion of the ceremonies, the excursion trains proceeded to Spokane, Portland, Tacoma and Seattle, where enthusiastic receptions were given the party."

From Mr. John H. La Vaque of Duluth has been received a copy of *The First Minnesota*, a paper published at Berryville, Virginia, March 11, 1862, "by a detachment of the typographical fraternity of the First Minnesota Regiment," consisting of "Ed. A. Stevens, Thos. H. Pressnell, O. Nelson, Chas. S. Drake, Frank J. Mead, Julian J. Kendall, Henry W. Lindergreen." When the Union troops took possession of Berryville, March 10, the editor of the *Berryville Conservator* fled, and these men,

being familiar with the art of printing, took possession of the plant and issued a four-page sheet. About one page of new matter, intended for the entertainment of the Union soldiers, was set up, and the remainder of the paper was filled out with advertisements and a report already in type for the *Conservator*.

A large framed roster of "Officers of the United States Army and Navy, Prisoners of War, Libby Prison, Richmond, Va." has been presented by Mrs. Martha A. Gordon of St. Paul in memory of her husband Lieutenant E. Gordon, of the Eighty-first Indiana Regiment, whose name appears thereon.

Fifteen original photographs of Civil War scenes, printed about 1890 from the plates made by M. B. Brady and Alexander Gardner, "authorized government photographers," have been presented by Mr. Wilbur L. Booth of St. Paul, through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Humason of the adjutant general's office.